

# USDAnews

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

## "Exercise Pinnacle" Tested The Strength Of USDA's COOP Plan

**Mock "Fatalities" Included  
Over 1,600 USDA Employees**

by Ron Hall  
Office of Communications

A terrorist-planted nuclear device explodes in downtown Washington, DC, during morning rush-hour. It kills over 100,000 people and emits a radioactive plume that drifts toward the northeastern U.S. The dead include over 1,600 USDA employees who work in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. A severe outbreak of Avian influenza breaks out at several poultry farms in Georgia. It then begins to spread northward, shutting down over 600 poultry production plants, plus affecting millions of fowl and leaving not only fowl but also humans dead or dying in its wake. Both the president and the vice-president of the U.S. ultimately die as a result of the nuclear explosion; the secretary of agriculture is killed in the nuclear explosion; and the deputy secretary of agriculture is killed in a car accident en route to Elkins, W.Va.

Those were some of the many "injects," or simulated problems to be dealt with, as part of "Exercise Pinnacle," a recent emergency preparedness exercise.

According to **Leslie Pozanek**, chief of the Continuity of Operations Planning Division in the Office of Procurement and Property Management, over 28

federal departments and agencies were players in Exercise Pinnacle, held on June 20-24. At USDA 261 employees participated.

She noted that the overall purpose of the exercise was to test the Continuity of Operations—or COOP—Plans for the federal departments and agencies which were participating in the governmentwide exercise. This included USDA's own COOP Plan.

"The idea," added **Freeman Walker**, the lead emergency specialist in the Continuity of Operations Planning Division, "was for agencies to test how they would carry out their own previously defined 'essential functions'—at an emergency relocation facility."

"That's because some emergency or disaster, either natural or human-caused, would have made the normal work location not available or uninhabitable."

**Len Benning**, an emergency management program specialist in that Division, pointed out that USDA had tested its COOP Plan in the past—most recently during "Exercise Forward Challenge 2004" held in May 2004. The May-June 2004 issue of the **USDA News** carried a story about that exercise.

"But what distinguished this latest exercise," he explained, "is that the scenario went straight through from 7 a.m. Wednesday morning through 5 p.m. Thursday evening. So our USDA participants worked shifts in order to ensure that we were responsive to developing events throughout the 36 hours of the exercise."

*continued on pg. 2...*



FS's **Steve Dunsky** (facing camera) prepares to interview **Bernie Weisgerber** (wearing hat), a retired FS historic preservation specialist who is an expert on the restoration of old buildings and the use of traditional tools. Dunsky conducted the interview for the documentary "The Greatest Good" at the Ninemile Ranger District on the Lolo National Forest near Missoula, Mont. That two-hour documentary focuses on the history, legacy, and future of the Forest Service, as that agency commemorates its centennial throughout this year. Note the story on page 4.—**PHOTO BY DAVE STEINKE**

## Here Are The Thoughts You Shared With Us About This Pub

by Ron Hall  
Office of Communications

In the September-October 2004 issue of the **USDA News** we invited you to complete a 'readers' evaluation' of this employee news publication.

Participants had the option of completing either an Internet version of the evaluation or a printed hard copy version that was included in the September-October 2004 issue. We received 1,108 responses—1,089 via the Internet and 19 via printed hard copy. Here are the results of those responses. Many thanks to all who took the time to express their thoughts—as we continue

to try to better serve our headquarters and field employees through this employee news publication.

### Question:

1) How often do you read the **USDA News**?

**Always	428 (45%)
Sometimes	447 (48%)
Never	63 (7%)

2) Here are three primary goals in publishing the **USDA News**:

(A) To feature stories which show how USDA employees both at headquarters and field locations are helping to carry out the mission of this Department in new, different, unique, and/or unusual ways, (B) To carry stories with a USDA focus related to such issues as personnel matters, financial concerns, and employee benefits, (C) To

*continued on pg. 7...*



# Mike Johanns *Secretary of Agriculture*

**D**ear Fellow Employees,  
As you know, the Administration has developed draft legislation that would require agencies to better manage, develop, and

reward federal employees who serve the American public. Called the "Working for America Act," it would enable departments to better recognize and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our employees.

If enacted, this would be the first major reform of the General Schedule personnel system since the late 1940s. Then the goal was to maintain government-wide consistency for jobs that were very similar and based on the principle of same pay for the same job, without regard for the level of performance. Today's workforce is far less uniform than it was more than 50 years ago.

Yet we are not proposing reform just because the current system has not kept pace with the diverse roles workers must fill today. We are proposing reform to address employee concerns spelled out in the "Federal Human Capital Survey" conducted by the Office of Personnel Management in 2004. The Survey was conducted for the first time in 2002.

The survey sample included more than 276,000 employees from 29 major federal agencies, as well as selected small/independent agencies. The government-wide response rate was 54 percent. USDA had 10,404 respondents and a 60 percent response rate.

Overall the results show that federal employees continue to be committed to working for America. Ninety-one percent believe the work they do is important. Eighty-three percent like what they do and 71 percent get a sense of personal accomplishment from their work. Responses from USDA employees to those three questions mirrored those percentages.

Two key concerns were raised by USDA employees as well as workers government-wide. Both relate to performance. According to the survey, 73 percent of federal employees do not believe adequate steps are taken to deal with poor performers and 71 percent believe differences in performance are not recognized in a meaningful way. As with the private sector, it would be beneficial to you if government agencies had more flexibility to reward innovative ideas and excellence.

Now I expect there to be much discussion about the proposed changes. But as President **George W. Bush** has said, "We must confront the tough problems, not avoid them and leave them for others. This is never easy, but it's what conscience demands and what leadership requires. We must keep the long view, and remind ourselves that we're here to serve the public's long-term interests."

I encourage you to take part in the discussion. To learn more about the proposed "Working for America Act" visit [www.results.gov](http://www.results.gov). Thank you for being part of the USDA team and for urging, through your survey responses, meaningful recognition for good work performance. ■

## "Exercise Pinnacle"...continued from pg. 1

Second, Benning noted that this exercise was less scripted, with more 'free play' as a result. Third, subject matter specialists—at USDA and governmentwide—played a larger role than in previous exercises, since they were relied on, for their expertise, as the scenario unfolded.

**Colin Harding**, a COOP consultant to the Continuity of Operations Planning Division, added that the exercises are also designed to test how effectively the Department's employees—who have been designated to deploy when USDA's COOP Plan is activated—are, in fact, able to deploy to USDA's headquarters emergency relocation facility, located in Elkins, W.Va. "Then, once they arrive," he said, "those employees are expected to set up an active, functioning, around-the-clock operation—and then carry out the 'essential functions' of USDA's mission which they have been assigned to do, plus effectively communicate, to USDA managers and to the public, the status of their activities."

Of USDA's 261 participants, 71 employees were designated to relocate. They left the Washington, DC, area and traveled by car to Elkins, setting up shop in the facility which is normally the Forest Service's headquarters building of the Monongahela National Forest.

**Dave Sloan**, the information technology specialist in that Division, said that the two-pronged scenario for Exercise Pinnacle focused on the terrorist-detonated nuclear device plus the spread of Avian flu. At the same time, USDA personnel involved in the exercise dealt with 'exer-

cise injects' that either played off of those two prongs or that were specific to USDA's mission.

Sloan said that USDA-specific 'injects' included such items as: several USDA employees involved in the Department's Continuity of Operations activities, both at headquarters and field locations, are getting sick—and medical personnel are confirming that it is probably caused by Avian flu; and some USDA agencies are making plans to contact temporary employment firms to hire contracted employees to temporarily replace USDA employees killed in the nuclear explosion.

**Tom Comi**, a COOP consultant to the Continuity of Operations Planning Division, said that USDA employees designated as COOP "Crisis Action Team" (CAT) members immediately deployed to Elkins, following the activation of USDA's COOP Plan, as part of the exercise.

"Their job," he pointed out, "is to respond to problems and activities occurring within their respective areas of responsibility. They'd coordinate the gathering of information about those events, coordinate the development of responses to resolve those events, and coordinate the communication to USDA senior officials about how the problems are being resolved."

During Exercise Pinnacle the CAT members worked 12-hour shifts—at a pace that would be typical of a real emergency—pounding the keys on their laptops, working the phones, and coordinating actions with their counterparts at other federal departments and agencies.

In order to keep a written record of actions

taken by USDA personnel, as well as help CAT members keep up with activities by their CAT colleagues in other program areas, CAT personnel provided periodic updates to a "journal of activities." Emergency management program specialist **Cynthia Powell**, one of the coordinators of the journal, explained that she kept it updated, minute by minute. "I also projected a scrolling image of the journal onto a wall in the 'Action Room' of the COOP Emergency Operations Center," she said. "That way, CAT members could glance up from their tasks at hand and do a quick scan of what else was going on."

Staff secretary **Mikaell Carter** added that CAT personnel also prepared briefing materials about developments in their respective areas of responsibility. "That information," she said, "was used to brief the Acting Secretary onsite."

So, any "lessons learned?"

"Yes," Pozanek replied. "The issues were more complex during this exercise, and the scenarios required that we interact to a greater degree with other federal departments. Plus, this exercise called for sustaining operations, non-stop, over a 36-hour period. So, not only did our USDA participants build on the lessons learned during the previous exercise last year, but we also met the challenges that were unique to this latest exercise—and I believe our track record reflects that."

"The lessons we all learned from Exercise Pinnacle will help us refine and strengthen our COOP planning—and be even more prepared for future exercises or COOP emergencies." ■

# Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

*Imports from Canada of live cattle resumed in July after a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling allowed USDA's BSE minimal risk regions rule to take effect. The United States-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement was signed by President **George W. Bush** in early August, opening new export opportunities for the nation's producers. In addition, President Bush signed the Energy Policy Act of 2005 on August 8, which greatly increases the nation's commitment to renewable fuels.*

*Secretary **Mike Johanns** held farm bill forums in Tennessee, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, California, Pennsylvania, Alabama, New Mexico, Illinois, and Kentucky. Deputy Secretary **Chuck Conner** hosted a forum in Indiana and co-hosted a forum in Alaska with Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment **Mark Rey** who also hosted a forum on conservation in Wyoming.*

**CAFTA:** President Bush signed the United States-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement on August 2. Over time, the agreement will eliminate tariffs on most U.S. goods sold to Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic. Currently those countries enjoy virtual tariff-free status on goods exported to the U.S. Citing the growing strength of the Central American democracies and preferential access to their market by third-party countries, the administration urged adoption of the pact. Upon signing the agreement the President said, "CAFTA is more than a trade bill; it is a commitment among freedom-loving nations to advance peace and prosperity throughout the region. As the oldest democracy in the Western hemisphere, the United States has a moral obliga-

tion and a vital national security interest in helping democracies in our neighborhood succeed, and CAFTA advances this goal."

## **Energy Policy Act Of 2005:**

The Energy Policy Act, which became law on August 8, includes a Renewable Fuels Standard that calls for production of 7.5 billion gallons of such fuels by 2012. In addition to ethanol and biodiesel production, the law encourages developing fuel from waste products such as poultry litter, livestock waste, and forestry biomass. The law also extends tax credits for biodiesel production and small producer investments in renewable fuel plants. "Taken together, these measures enable our nation's farmers and ranchers to expand our domestic energy supply, which promotes economic growth, independence, and prosperity in America," Johanns said.

## **Cooperative Conservation:**

The White House held a national Conference on Cooperative Conservation on August 29-31 in St. Louis to promote a new conservation dialogue and philosophy for the 21st century. Convened by the White House Council on Environmental Quality, the gathering sought to identify innovative and effective approaches to promoting cooperative conservation.

Secretary Johanns gave the keynote address highlighting the many examples of cooperative conservation used by USDA agencies. For example, USDA's soil surveys, begun in 1899, have evolved into a partnership of state and federal agencies working together to collect, classify, interpret, and provide soils information.

"Soil surveys are the foundation for land conservation activities as well as private and commercial land development," said Johanns. "Soil survey maps help to enable agricultural producers, conservationists, engineering firms, county



*Sporting a knit shirt that reads "Ag Progress Days—Penn State," Secretary **Mike Johanns** hosts the Pennsylvania Farm Bill Forum in University Park, Pa., on Aug. 16. It's one of several such forums he has been hosting around the country. He noted that their purpose is to "provide stakeholders the opportunity to share their thoughts about changes we should consider as we prepare for a new farm bill." —PHOTO BY BOB NICHOLS*

and city planners, and others to make informed decisions concerning land use. Posting soil survey information on the Internet is one more step in our effort to make information more accessible to the citizens we serve." Currently, the Natural Resources Conservation Service has soils maps and data available online for more than 95 percent of the nation's counties. To view go to <http://soils.usda.gov/survey>

## **Food For Progress Goes To Iraq:**

The U.S. Grains Council will use commodities donated by USDA to help revitalize the Iraqi poultry industry. Under USDA's Food for Progress program, the donated corn and soybean meal will be sold and the proceeds used to provide a revolving loan fund for poultry producers, training in credit fund management, and trade capacity building for the Iraqi Poultry Producers Association. "Agriculture is vital to the Iraqi economy and this donation will help to revitalize their agriculture sector as an engine of economic

growth," said Secretary Johanns. "We are very pleased that USDA's Food for Progress program will help to improve the quality of life available to the Iraqi people."

## **Rice Genome Sequencing:**

Researchers from the International Rice Genome Sequencing Project, funded in part by USDA, completed a sequence of the rice genome that will become a key resource to improve the nutritional quality and productivity of rice. Rice is the first crop plant to be sequenced and is significant because it shares common sets of genes with most of the world's major food and feed crops, such as corn, wheat, rye, and barley. It is also a staple food for much of the world. The map-based sequence has led to the identification of genes responsible for important traits that affect growth and promote higher yields. Secretary Johanns said, "This is an important scientific milestone that will help us to end famine in the developing world and open new opportunities for America's rice industry."

—PATRICIA KLINTBERG

# Employees *make these things happen*

## Natural Resources and Environment

### Grab Some Popcorn And Get Comfy; This Really Is Worth Watching

*"...where conflicting interests must be reconciled, the question will always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."*

—Gifford Pinchot, 1905

*"That's where we got the title for our documentary."*

—Steve Dunsky, 2005

*"And, even with 100 years of usage, it still works just right."*

—Dave Steinke, 2005

Dunsky and Steinke were referring to the phrase "The Greatest Good"—which is the title of a documentary on the history, legacy, and future of the Forest Service, as that agency commemorates its centennial throughout this year.

Dunsky is an audiovisual manager with the agency's Pacific Southwest Region in Vallejo, Calif. Steinke is an audiovisual manager with the agency's Rocky Mountain Region in Lakewood, Colo. **Ann Dunsky** is an FS audiovisual production specialist with the Pacific Southwest Region. The three served as co-producers of the two-hour documentary, which is the end product of three years of research, interviews, writing, filming, and post-production.

S. Dunsky pointed out that the phrase "The Greatest Good"—lifted out of that quote from Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the Forest Service when the agency was created by law in 1905—was also, ironically, the same title of a film which the agency had produced to commemorate its 50th anniversary in 1955. "So," he observed, "that phrase, all along, has had staying power when someone wants to use it to ask about the mission of the Forest Service—no matter what the year is."

Steinke explained that the documentary consists of four parts. The first part, titled "The Fight for Conservation," uses historical images to capture the early days of the conservation movement in America. "It was an era of unchecked exploitation of the country's natural resources," he observed. "But then there emerged a new breed of leaders who had what were then regarded as 'radical ideas' about adopting conservation practices that would benefit the greatest portion of the population."

Part Two, titled "Building the System," focused on the fact that, in its early days, the Forest Service had to invent the tools and policies



FS's **Dave Steinke** (wearing cap) studies a field monitor image of interviewee **Bud Moore**, while Moore (foreground) faces the camera as he is being interviewed in front of his home in Swan Valley, Mont. This was part of the filming for "The Greatest Good." Moore, a retired FS firefighter and district ranger, began his career with the agency in 1934. The furry object in the upper right corner is the boom microphone.—**PHOTO BY STEVE DUNSKY**

needed to manage public lands, such as "forest reserves," which were ultimately called "national forests." "In this section," Steinke added, "the documentary emphasizes how natural and social disasters—including catastrophic fires and the Great Depression—had a powerful influence on this young agency."

Part Three is simply titled "Boom!" A. Dunsky noted that while World War II transformed the U.S., it also transformed the Forest Service. "The agency shifted from a 'stewardship role'—where it emphasized caring for the land—to a 'production role'—where it emphasized fulfilling postwar demands for timber," she noted. "This was the time when the agency's 'multiple use concept' was put into action—and also the time when conflicts began to develop among competing interests."

In Part Four, titled "The Greatest Good?", A. Dunsky advised that the Forest Service found it increasingly difficult to determine 'the greatest good.' "This section speaks to a time of more outspoken public and increased environmental activism, challenging the interests of logging and ranching communities," she said. "At the same time, a new scientific understanding of ecosystems helped form a vision for public land management that continues to evolve and guide the Forest Service."

"This documentary," she affirmed, "brings together national organizations, renowned historians, current and former Forest Service employees, critics of the agency, political activists, environmental activists, and timber activists to share their perspectives on one hundred years

of conservation—and the prospects for the future." In fact, added S. Dunsky, he, Steinke, and A. Dunsky interviewed approximately 70 individuals, resulting in 43 on-camera interviews in the documentary.

"But before that, came the research stage," Steinke said. "We boned up on the history of the agency. We spent a year going through nearly 500 films, looking at nearly 50,000 images, and between Steve and me, we read close to 200 books on the Forest Service."

"So," he quipped, "now my knowledge of the agency has gone way up—bigtime." "And," S. Dunsky added, "this helped us to make sure that the history we showed in the video was bullet-proof, and that we could justify every statement that we made or used in the program."

Then the third major step, following research and interviews, was editing the raw footage plus incorporating 'still photography' into the video. "I had to meticulously clean all the rarely-seen historical black and white images, and then prepare them for the final edit," explained **Judy Dersch**, an FS graphic artist with the agency's Rocky Mountain Region who coordinated the artwork and art direction for the documentary.

Two questions: first, regarding one particular clip from the documentary: in an excerpt from an episode of the long-running "Lassie" TV show, for several years **Lassie's** owner at the time worked for the Forest Service. Is that correct?

"Yes," affirmed A. Dunsky. "That was a unique TV plot line that came about in the later episodes of that TV series. That particular scene helped convey the Forest Service's message that the agency was trying to 'do the right thing'."

2nd question: How did you get CBS-TV news-person **Charles Osgood** to do the narration?



FS's **Ann Dunsky** (center) carefully frames her question to **E.J. Smith** (left), a retired veterinarian who doctored the original **Smokey Bear** when it was rescued from a fire on the Lincoln National Forest in New Mexico in 1950. In the meantime, FS's **Steve Dunsky** (kneeling, right) and **Dave Steinke** carefully frame Smith's image, during the filming of "The Greatest Good."—**PHOTO BY KAREN BERGETHON**

# Editor's Roundup *USDA's people in the news*



**Richard Raymond** is the under secretary for food safety.

Before joining USDA, from October 2004 until his confirmation by the U.S. Senate for this position Raymond served as director of the Department of Regulation and Licensure in the Nebraska Health and Human Services System. In that capacity, he oversaw regulatory programs involving health care and environmental issues that impact public health. In addition, he continued to serve since 1999 as Nebraska's chief medical officer in the Nebraska Health and Human Services System, overseeing the state's public health programs, including disease prevention and health promotion.

From 1990-99 Raymond was director of the Clarkson Medical Center's Family Practice Residency Program which he had established in Omaha. In addition, from 1997-99 he was the co-medical director of that hospital's Hospice Program. He worked as a family doctor for 27 years, from 1973-99. This included 17 years in the rural part of north-central Nebraska.

**Elsa Murano**, the previous under secretary for food safety, is now vice chancellor of agriculture for

the Texas A&M University System, dean of the College of Agriculture at Texas A&M University-College Station, and director of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station. ■



**Merlyn Carlson** is the deputy under secretary for natural resources and environment, responsible for policy related to the programs of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Before joining USDA, from January 1999 until his appointment to this position Carlson served as director of agriculture for Nebraska. In that capacity he worked as an advocate for Nebraska agriculture, overseeing regulatory programs, promoting agriculture products in both domestic and international markets, and ensuring wise stewardship of natural resources.

Carlson served as a board member of the Deuel County (Neb.) Soil Conservation Service from 1975-85, where he concentrated on soil and water conservation and irrigation efficiency for both Deuel County and Cheyenne County, Neb. From 1957-2004 he operated a cattle ranch and farm in western Nebraska where he also raised corn, wheat, and alfalfa.

**Mack Gray**, the previous deputy

under secretary for natural resources and environment, retired from this position following 39 years of federal service. Before rejoining USDA in that position he had been retired, since June 1991, following 35 years with the [then] Soil Conservation Service. ■



**Barb Masters** is the administrator of the Food Safety and Inspection Service.

From March 2004 until her selection for this position Masters served as acting administrator of FSIS. She was the deputy assistant administrator for FSIS's Office of Field Operations from 2002-2004.

From 2000-2002 Masters served as the director of FSIS's Slaughter Operations Staff at the agency's Technical Service Center in Omaha. She was a branch chief in FSIS's Processing Operations Staff in Omaha from 1998-2000, during which she supervised the Technical Service Center's Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points—HACCP—Hotline for employees and industry. From 1993-98 she worked as a staff officer in FSIS's Slaughter Operations Staff [then] located in Washington, DC, after having worked as a staff officer in FSIS's Technology Transfer and Coordina-

tion Staff in Omaha from 1992-93. She began her career with FSIS in 1989 as a veterinary medical officer in Hot Springs, Ark., where she was the inspector-in-charge at a livestock slaughter and processing establishment.

**Garry McKee**, the previous administrator of FSIS, is now the science advisor for FSIS's Technical Service Center in Omaha, providing scientific and public health guidance to the Center staff. ■



**“If ever there was a ‘crown with a purpose’, it has to be mine!”**

**Mary Sue Ohlhauser** was

referring to the crown that she won when she was selected as Mrs. North Dakota International in a statewide contest this past spring. And the “purpose” she referred to was the fact that her platform, during her reign as Mrs. North Dakota International, is to promote further awareness of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's Disease.

Ohlhauser is a farm loan specialist with the Farm Service Agency at its North Dakota State Office in Fargo. But until her reign ends in April 2006 she is taking periodic annual leave, traveling throughout the state to promote further awareness of ALS.

*...continued from pg. 4*

“We just called his office, and Charlie—who likes to be called ‘Charlie’—was very accommodating,” Steinke explained. “It cost us nearly \$10,000—which Charlie donated to one of his favorite charities.”

Okay, but this is *still* a film about a federal agency—prepared by federal employees. So, ummm, howcum this isn't a fluffy, frothy, cotton candy puff-piece about the Forest Service?

S. Dunsky replied that they wanted the video to offer a “realistic, candid, unbiased overview” of an agency that oversees 155 national forests and 20 national grasslands. Therefore, they did not intend to shy away from sensitive topics.

“In this film,” Steinke added, “we were self-critical where we needed to be, and not overly congratulatory where we had an opportunity to

be. The reaction to the film has been that it is balanced and fair—and we're pretty proud of that.”

“The Greatest Good” had its debut in Washington, DC at the Centennial Forest Congress on January 3, 2005, before an audience of over 600 people.

Since that time it has been shown over 1,000 times at such formal venues as universities, museums, environmental film festivals, visitor centers, large group gatherings, and local theaters both around the country and around the world—and usually for free. A schedule of showings, as well as other background info about the video, is available on [www.fs.fed.us/greatestgood](http://www.fs.fed.us/greatestgood)

In addition, S. Dunsky noted, plans are being finalized to air the documentary on public television stations nationwide, possibly to begin in

early 2006.

Steinke said that on Aug. 19, 2005 he received a letter from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences—i.e., “The Academy.” “‘The Greatest Good’ aired for a week in a theater in Los Angeles—with admission being charged,” he explained. “That's a criterion for submission to the Academy for an Oscar nomination in the category of ‘Feature Length Documentary’ for the 2006 Academy Awards.”

So, are you practicing possible acceptance speeches—and, even before that, practicing a walk on the fabled red carpet?

“Dave will have to take the walk on that carpet,” S. Dunsky laughed, “because he's the only one of us with a Forest Service uniform.”

—RON HALL

So, how did she get interested in this particular contest?

Ohlhauser explained that her friend **Julie Kottsick**, who also lives in Fargo, had been a contestant in the competition in 2003. But in October 2004 Kottsick was diagnosed as having Lou Gehrig's Disease. "Julie wasn't able to compete again," Ohlhauser said. "So she offered to lend me some of the outfits she had worn in the contest, if I would enter it. I thought about it—I didn't have any idea where this quest might take me—and ultimately decided to take up the challenge."

She filled out the "Mrs. International Official Entry Form," which asked such questions as "[List] Three words that describe you" (her answer: "optimistic, genuine, and dedicated"); "Favorite saying" ("If **God** brought you to it, He will bring you through it"); Favorite Family Tradition ("Christmas Eve midnight mass"); and "What is the greatest challenge facing married

couples today?" ("making sure that married couples stay emotionally close together even as they concentrate on raising their children"). Along with that form she included her check of \$475 for the registration and entry fee.

One week later Ohlhauser received a packet confirming her selection as a contestant in the state-level pageant. "I don't know how many entries they had—but there were eight of us who made the cut. My fellow contestants were all very well-versed on current issues and well-rounded in their interests," she recounted. "And," she quipped, "it's probably a sign of the times that, in addition to requirements about the age range of each contestant, a minimum length of each contestant's marriage, and a requirement that each contestant and her husband must be residing together, the rules of the contest also included a statement that '[Each] contestant must be a born

female married to a born male'."

Ohlhauser explained that the competition—"which is *not* a beauty pageant," she hastened to underscore—was based on "Interview" (50 percent), "Fitness" (25 percent), and "Evening Gown" (25 percent). Its theme—both in North Dakota and in the nationwide contest—is "Showcasing the accomplishments of today's married women."

She said that each contestant met one-on-one with five different judges for five minutes each. She said that no political or religious questions were allowed, and that the questions she was asked dealt with such subjects as: what makes her tick, role models, and aspects of her marriage. "I kept emphasizing, to all the judges, that my role model was Julie Kottsick, and elaborated on what an inspiration she is," Ohlhauser recalled.

During the actual contest each contestant was asked a question

about her platform issue, and Ohlhauser elaborated on her plans to promote further awareness of ALS.

So, no questions about World Peace? "No, they didn't even want to go there," she laughed.

After Ohlhauser won the title she was asked about whether she preferred being called "Mary Sue" or "Susie." "But mom, I thought your new name is 'Mrs. North Dakota,'" piped up her three-year-old daughter **Kennedy Jo**.

Ohlhauser ultimately represented her state in the "Mrs. International Pageant" contest held in Chicago July 22-23. That competition was won by Mrs. Virginia International.

Ohlhauser recently attended a meeting of a local service club in Devils Lake, N.D., where she spoke about her platform issue. "And I want to make Julie Kottsick—and her courage and strength—famous," she affirmed. ■

—JIM MEISENHEIMER

## PROFILE PLUS *More About: Eric Hentges*



**T**he man who runs the smallest program agency in USDA is determined to make the biggest improvements ever in the diets of ordinary Americans. **Eric Hentges**, executive director of the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, is a would-be cowhand whose keen interest in animal science evolved into a fascination with the physiology of human nutrition—or the

study of how food affects the human body.

Hentges grew up in Gainesville, Fla., where his father was on the faculty at the University. But he was influenced most by the summers he spent on his extended family's ranch near Perry, Okla. There he had the opportunity to handle cattle and help with wheat and alfalfa harvests summer after summer.

Not surprisingly he decided to attend Oklahoma State University and earned a degree in animal science. After graduation, the American Angus Association helped Hentges go to Japan to work on a Dude Ranch, where, he said, "you didn't have to ride or rope very well to stay on the job." Back in the states he worked on a purebred Hereford ranch. Over time he became interested in the contribution livestock make to the human diet as a fuel for growth.

He went on to earn a master's degree in growth and developmental physiology at Auburn University and a Ph.D. in nutrition physiology from Iowa State. He did post-doctoral research in mid-1980 in conjunction with the University of Georgia's Food and Nutrition Department and USDA's Richard B. Russell Agricultural Research Center.

Since then he's held a variety of posts dedicated to human nutrition and education.

During his tenure at USDA he has overseen the development of the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans and launched the new **MyPyramid.gov** all within the last year. With a staff of only 26 people and a budget under \$3 million, Hentges has learned how to leverage the intellectual capital

available within CNPP along with the nutrition folks at the Agricultural Research Service, the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, the Food Safety and Inspection Service, the Food and Nutrition Service, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

"The challenge now is implementation," Hentges said. As of early August, **MyPyramid.gov** has had nearly 670 million hits. Nearly 300,000 registered users visit each day and 183 of the world's 193 nations have logged on. "We have to make sure that **MyPyramid.gov** fulfills the promise and connects with people in order to get the behavior changes we are looking for."

Next? A version of **MyPyramid.gov** for children and the conversion of all the information into Spanish.

**Last Book Read:** "*The Tales of Hans Christian Andersen*," this summer's nighttime reading to his daughters ages 12 and 14.

**Last Movie Seen:** "*Pirates of the Caribbean*"

**Hobbies:** Bird hunting and fishing.

**Favorite Weekend Breakfast:** "I am the nutrition guy, but for one of our weekend breakfasts my daughters and I prepare and cook everything. Breakfast includes grits, sausages, eggs, milk, juice, and perhaps a pastry."

**Priorities In The Months Ahead:** "I want to use all of the good work that USDA has done with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Food and Nutrition Service, and others to do an even better job of changing people's eating behaviors. It is clear that people are interested in change, and I want Americans to turn preferentially to USDA for the information that will help them develop those long-term behaviors that will result in a lifetime of benefits. In addition, we are exploring with ARS the development of human nutrition trials that will use **MyPyramid.gov** and the Dietary Guidelines as the basis for the studies. We expect the results will help attract users to **MyPyramid.gov**, a free, simple approach that Americans can use to maintain a healthy lifestyle."

—PATRICIA KLINTBERG

**About This Pub...continued from pg. 1**

carry stories which show USDA employees as newsmakers, both within and outside the Department.

**3) Are these the best goals for this publication?**

Yes	834	(92%)
No	73	(8%)

**4) If yes, do you think the USDA News has been successful in accomplishing these goals?**

Yes	769	(89%)
No	97	(11%)

**5) If no, what do you think is a more appropriate purpose?**

Responses included: "I think more stories about field jobs and their importance should be covered;" "The purpose is fine but the format is difficult to use on older computers. Many times I can't get the message to open;" "I don't think this publication is very well distributed;" "Frankly, I think it's a waste of taxpayers' money. Individuals are better served by their agencies' newsletters and e-mail routing lists;" "I like this publication and since it comes out electronically it is very easy to read and also conserves natural resources;" "End it and use the money to support the real goals of the agencies;" "It helps to keep me connected and 'grounded' as far as my agency's role in the grand scheme of things."

**6) The following news items generally appear in each issue of the USDA News. How do you rate them in terms of their usefulness?**

(Choose from "Extremely Useful," "Fairly Useful," "Not Very Useful," or "Don't Bother"):

**7) News stories and feature stories in each issue:**

Extremely Useful	270	(31%)
Fairly Useful	489	(56%)
Not Very Useful	90	(11%)
Don't Bother	20	(2%)

**8) Photos in each issue:**

Extremely Useful	243	(28%)
Fairly Useful	457	(53%)
Not Very Useful	133	(15%)
Don't Bother	34	(4%)

**9) "Employees Make These Things Happen":**

Extremely Useful	298	(35%)
Fairly Useful	438	(51%)
Not Very Useful	100	(11%)
Don't Bother	24	(3%)

**10) "The Secretary's Column":**

Extremely Useful	225	(26%)
------------------	-----	-------

Fairly Useful	423	(49%)
Not Very Useful	150	(17%)
Don't Bother	65	(8%)

**11) "People in the News":**

Extremely Useful	272	(32%)
Fairly Useful	423	(49%)
Not Very Useful	124	(15%)
Don't Bother	38	(4%)

**12) "Profile Plus":**

Extremely Useful	195	(23%)
Fairly Useful	444	(53%)
Not Very Useful	159	(19%)
Don't Bother	39	(5%)

**13) "Notes from USDA Headquarters":**

Extremely Useful	308	(36%)
Fairly Useful	419	(50%)
Not Very Useful	91	(11%)
Don't Bother	25	(3%)

**14) "Administrative Nuggets":**

Extremely Useful	252	(30%)
Fairly Useful	423	(50%)
Not Very Useful	135	(16%)
Don't Bother	34	(4%)

**15) "USDA-Sponsored Calendar Highlights":**

Extremely Useful	200	(24%)
Fairly Useful	395	(47%)
Not Very Useful	180	(21%)
Don't Bother	71	(8%)

**16) Are there any other sections, or items of news interest, you would like to see included? If so, please list them.**

Responses included: "More news from field locations;" "employee benefits;" "about retirement;" "District news, what is going on in other areas of country that might be of interest to all of us;" "helping employees understand current regulation changes and MOU events;" "employee recognition in the field. All we hear about is upper management;" "more on policies;" "articles on supplies;" "Have the people on the bottom rungs contribute;" "safety related issues;" "accurate and truthful info on policies and programs affecting employment."

**17) Are there any other sections, or items of news interest, you would like eliminated? If so, please list them.**

Responses included: "the entire thing;" "I am not interested in personnel case studies, promotions, in the news, etc.;" "get to the point, print the facts and leave all the other out;" "leave out the partisan politics;" "I already have too many things to read, so I would close down the press;" "Some stories are interesting but some are blah;" "Too many things to read now and getting

our job done;" "Make it fit the news, not the news fit it;" "Just make sure that the **USDA News** reaches the Agencies on time for reading."

**18) Is the length of items in the USDA News:**

Just about right	695	(85%)
Too long	79	(10%)
Too short	42	(5%)

**19) How do you rate the size, design, and layout of the USDA News?**

Excellent	155	(19%)
Good	492	(60%)
Fair	144	(18%)
Poor	10	(1%)
Unsatisfactory	16	(2%)

**20) What, if anything, would you want to see different in either the size, design, or layout?**

Responses included: "I would read it online if I got an e-mail saying it was out there; I don't think to look for it;" "send only in colorful, dynamic PDF file;" "make the pictures a little larger;" "I would like to see it in color format;" "Picture captions are hard for me to read;" "so it fits right on the computer;" "Make it more appealing to the eye;" "The pictures and colored block format takes forever to print;" "usually I can hardly recognize the people I do know, so maybe something can be done to make the photos better to view;" "unable to open pdf version;" "A more readable font; Use color to spark an interest in reading."

**21) Which version of the USDA News do you usually read?**

Internet	327	(42%)
Printed hard copy	450	(58%)

**22) Would you prefer to access the USDA News online, rather than read it in the printed hard copy format?**

Yes	440	(57%)
No	328	(43%)

**23) In terms of usefulness, how do you rate the USDA News?**

Excellent	148	(19%)
Good	443	(56%)
Fair	149	(19%)
Poor	31	(4%)
Unsatisfactory	15	(2%)

**\*\*EDITOR'S NOTE:** Some respondents did not provide answers to all the questions on the evaluation form. Accordingly, in no instance did the total number of responses to each individual question add up to 1,108, which was the maximum number possible for each question.





"This journal item reflects that we're shipping some emergency food commodities to one of the disaster sites in Philadelphia," notes FNCS Crisis Action Team member **Anita Cunningham** (right). It's 3 a.m., but she is busy coordinating a submission about her mission area into a "journal of activities" with **Mikaell Carter** (center), staff secretary in the Continuity of Operations Planning Division, and **Sam Lammie**, a Forest Service Geographic Information System program manager on the Monongahela National Forest in Elkins, W.Va. That journal contained a log of actions by USDA employees participating in "Exercise Pinnacle." Note the story on page 1.—**PHOTO BY RON HALL**



#### Help Us Find

### Jesus Espino-Meza

Missing: 6-20-2004

From: Corralitos, CA

D.O.B. 10-12-1998

Sex: Male

Hair: Brown

Eyes: Brown

Height: 4 ft. 0 in.

Weight: 60 lbs.

If you have information, please call

**1-800-843-5678**

NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

## USDA-Sponsored Calendar Highlights

### ■ September 11-14

*National Minority Enterprise  
Development Week*

Washington, DC

(202) 720-6259 or 1-800-877-8339 (TDD)

### ■ Month of September

*National Food Safety Education Month*

USDA headquarters and field offices

1-888-674-6854 or 1-800-256-7072 (TDD)

### ■ Month of September

*National Preparedness Month*

USDA headquarters and field offices

(202) 720-8846 or 1-800-877-8339 (TDD)

### ■ September 15-October 15

*Hispanic Heritage Month*

USDA headquarters and field offices

(202) 720-7314 or (202) 720-6382 (TDD)

**U.S. Department of Agriculture**  
**1400 Independence Ave, SW**  
**Washington, DC 20250**



OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300